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Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

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Thursday, 28 May 2015, 3.10 p.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Murmokaitė	(Lithuania)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Chad	Mr. Gombo
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Mr. Omaish
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Ried
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/368)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/368)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/368, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014).

Before giving the floor to Ms. Amos, I would like to take this opportunity, since this will be her final briefing to the Council as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to thank her for her exceptional service. The Council wishes her every success in her future endeavours.

I now give the floor to Ms. Amos.

Ms. Amos: As this is my last briefing to the Council, it is many ways fitting that it is on Syria, as during my time as Emergency Relief Coordinator it is this crisis that has taken more of my time and attention, and those of this Council, than any other crisis in the world. It is the Syria crisis and its consequences that have led me to the belief that the Council and the international community more broadly, needs to do more to protect civilians and ensure greater accountability for violations of international humanitarian law.

I have been proud to serve in the United Nations as I have a strong belief in the values of the Organization and the principles underpinning the Charter, and feel that in today's unpredictable and deeply troubled world, we need the United Nations more than ever. As I have watched the huge rise in the number of people around the world affected by conflict and natural disasters — an estimated 70 million in 2010, when I started, and 114 million today — it is clear that there needs to be a major rethink of humanitarian response efforts — who does what, who pays for it and greater investment in conflict prevention, disaster preparedness, peace and State-building.

In my time in this role, I have seen the very worst of what people are capable of and also the very best of humanity — the countless Syrians who, despite the gravity of their situation, have not given up hope and refuse to buy into the rhetoric that the country's problems can be solved through violence. It is found in the bonds forged between strangers who do everything they can to help their fellow countrymen and women survive. It is reflected in the generosity of families in Syria and neighbouring countries sheltering, feeding and clothing the displaced without asking anything in return.

It is embodied in the staff and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the first responders and the staff of hospitals and clinics throughout the country who do not let narrow political interest cloud their commitment to doing everything they can to safeguard the well-being of ordinary Syrians. And it is demonstrated in the thousands of staff of the United Nations on the ground who carry out their duties day in and day out, despite petty political pressure and, in some cases, violence and intimidation from the parties to the conflict.

For more than four years, we have watched Syria descend into deeper depths of despair, surpassing what even the most pessimistic observers thought possible. The situation throughout the country is by any measure extremely grave and deteriorating by the day. In the past weeks, we have seen more and more heinous acts, and innocent men, women and children killed, maimed, displaced and subjected to a savagery that no human should have to endure. For example, at the end of April, a market in Darkoush, in rural Idlib, was subjected to aerial bombing that killed between 40 and 50 people and wounding over 100 civilians. The same market was again hit last week, with reports of 20 more people being killed. Reports have emerged of the killing of civilians by the Islamic State in Iraq

and the Levant (ISIL) following its capture of Palmyra in the past week. Such blatant disregard for the most basic rules of international humanitarian law — the distinction between civilians and combatants — must be condemned in the strongest terms.

In February of last year, the Council came together to adopt resolution 2139 (2014). It was clear in what it demanded of the parties — that they end the violence, comply with international law, and ensure that obligations to facilitate humanitarian access to people in need were met. Yet, for the past 15 months, the Secretary-General has systematically reported on the continued non-compliance with the Council's demands. While the cross-border deliveries enabled by resolutions 2165 (2014) (2014) and 2191 (2014) have allowed the United Nations to extend its reach and complement the enormous efforts of our NGO partners, the parties to the conflict have ignored practically all aspects of the resolution.

The use of chlorine continues to be reported, killing, injuring and terrorizing civilians. Indiscriminate attacks, although prohibited by international humanitarian law, continue with no regard for the protection of civilians. Schools and hospitals continue to be attacked. Physicians for Human Rights recorded more attacks on medical facilities in April than it had in any month since the adoption of resolution 2139 (2014). Some 422,000 people — nearly twice the number as when resolution 2139 (2014) was adopted — are under siege. If I had reported this at the beginning of the conflict, I am sure that Council members would not have believed it possible; today, we take it for granted. The United Nations and our partners were not able to reach any besieged locations in April.

People are trying to survive day by day without the basic necessities of life, such as water and electricity, and parties to the conflict continue to cut services, collectively punishing entire villages and cities in the process. Restrictions on the delivery of aid continue. The Government's introduction of new rules and regulations, which result in delays and distractions, are preventing us from delivering assistance, including surgical supplies, to people in desperate need. Of the 48 inter-agency convoys requests submitted since December, 5 have been completed, 9 have been approved in principle by the Government of Syria and are at various stages of preparations, and a further 11 have been put on hold due to insecurity. Nineteen more are awaiting a reply.

ISIL's advance brings with it new depths of depravity to Syria, with indiscriminate killing and maiming, raping and destroying. It has forcibly recruited children and made the delivery of humanitarian assistance more and more difficult in areas under its control. In addition to the restriction of operations to deliver food and other supplies, aid workers have been prevented from vaccinating children in areas of the country under their control.

Today, more than 12.2 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance in Syria — an increase of almost one third compared to when resolution 2139 (2014) was adopted. Many of those who were previously able to care for themselves are now in need of help. Fewer than half of the country's hospitals are fully functioning. Two million children in Syria are out of school. The social, economic and human costs of this tragedy are profound. It may take generations for Syria to recover. An additional 540,000 people have been displaced this year alone, adding to the 7.6 million already displaced. Another nearly 4 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, placing host countries and communities under unbearable pressure. I thank Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey for their significant efforts in this regard. Desperation means that more and more people are prepared to make the perilous journey to Europe by sea.

The Security Council can demonstrate its leadership and uphold its responsibility for international peace and security by taking the following measures.

First, it should ensure the protection of civilians. Secondly, it should ensure that the parties to the conflict abide by their international legal obligations and Security Council resolutions to facilitate humanitarian access to all people in need throughout the country, without discrimination. Thirdly, it should bring an end to the sieges, which collectively punish people. Fourthly, it should consider all possible avenues to ensure accountability, thereby sending a clear message to those responsible for violations of international law, as well as their victims, that the international community will not tolerate such action in Syria or elsewhere. Fifthly, it should step up financial support for the humanitarian response effort; and, sixthly, it should respect the non-political nature of humanitarian aid and give aid workers the space they need to carry out their work free of political pressure.

I know that there are no easy answers or quick fixes. But I also know that we cannot let the difficulties

prevent us from upholding our responsibility to act on behalf of the people of Syria. We cannot leave Syrians abandoned to hopelessness and further despair. The Security Council is entrusted with considerable power and responsibility. For the sake of Syria and its future generations, the Council must set aside its political differences and come together to find a solution to what appear to be intractable problems. We saw in the adoption of resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014) what can be done when the Council acts together and speaks with one voice. I very much hope it happens again.

The President: I thank Ms. Amos for her briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this important meeting on the humanitarian situation in my country.

We have repeatedly stated in this Chamber and beyond that the humanitarian crisis in Syria cannot end if we do not deal with the root of the problem, which is the spread of foreign-backed terrorism. That has to accompany a Syrian-Syrian dialogue under Syrian leadership, without foreign intervention. That is the substance of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), Kofi Annan's six-point plan and what we achieved at the Geneva II talks, as well as the first and second Moscow conferences. It is the only serious path to ending what is called the crisis in Syria and to improving the humanitarian situation in a tangible, genuine and sustainable manner.

The people's suffering cannot be completely alleviated simply by providing some humanitarian aid in one region or another, although we are fully aware of the importance of providing such assistance and of alleviating the suffering in the areas concerned. Recent developments have proved us right, since despite the fact that six humanitarian response plans were adopted in cooperation with the Syrian Government, taken all together they have still been unable to end the humanitarian crisis. In fact, we have seen new humanitarian crises develop in some previously safe areas in the wake of the incursions by some terrorist groups, such as we have seen in Palmyra, Idlib, Jisr Al-Shughur and today in the city of Ariha, in Idlib. That has resulted in the killing or displacement of a large number of innocent Syrians and robbed them of their livelihoods and dignity. It confirms once again that the humanitarian crisis, including the issues of internal displacement and refugees, has occurred only in areas entered by armed terrorist organizations.

It is therefore crucial that the Security Council's resolutions on fighting terrorism be implemented, particularly resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015), along with resolution 1624 (2005), which prohibits incitement to terrorism, and that they be implemented in full cooperation and coordination with the Syrian Government. That would put an end to the alliance between Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia that supports, finances and arms the terrorist groups and which is supported politically and in the media by its paymasters and foreign sponsors.

But the problem is that some influential States are not serious about fighting terrorism, especially terrorism as it is practised by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and organizations affiliated with it. That is used by some countries to exert pressure to prevent any coordination between Syria and Iraq in fighting ISIS. That policy was made manifest this morning when the General Assembly adopted resolution 69/281, on saving Iraqi artifacts. Syria was a sponsor of that resolution. However, Western countries threatened Iraq by saying that if Syrian artifacts were mentioned the draft resolution would not be adopted — as if Iraqi heritage were different from Syrian heritage, or ISIS in Syria were different from ISIS in Iraq, and as if those benefiting were two separate parties with no affiliation with each other.

That general problem is also confirmed by the fact that ISIS continues to obtain weapons and attract new recruits to its ranks. The percentage of foreign fighters in ISIS increased to 70 per cent after the adoption of resolution 2178 (2014). That was also the testimony of the Security Council's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, established pursuant to resolution 1526 (2004). In paragraph 33 of its recent report on foreign terrorist fighters (S/2015/358), the Monitoring Team, the Council's own experts, confirmed that the primary movement routes of foreign terrorists into Syria and Iraq ran through Turkey and, to a lesser degree, Jordan and Lebanon.

Many Council member States often affirm, both inside and outside the Council — as do the Secretary-General and the senior staff of the Secretariat — that the only possible solution to the crisis in Syria is a political rather than a military one. However, it is obvious that this is simply a slogan for political and media consumption.

How can we speak of a political solution when, as we heard only a few days ago, the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs states that his country has an agreement with the United States to provide air support to terrorist groups in Syria? How can they claim to be rejecting a military solution when they are providing support to terrorists and opening training camps for them in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan, in the name of a moderate Syrian armed opposition? However, the real question we have for those States and for their representatives in this Chamber is this: Where is that moderate armed opposition on the map of Syria? Is it in Palmyra, in Idlib, in Jisr Al-Shughur or Derizor? Or maybe in Qalamoun, on our border with Lebanon? And what is the fate of the weapons and funds supplied to that moderate armed opposition?

It is no longer possible to continue misleading, defrauding and hiding behind the slogan of a moderate armed opposition in order to justify supporting terrorism. How can Chechen, Australian, British, French, Moroccan and Libyan citizens be part of a moderate Syrian opposition? It is very simple. Things have become crystal clear. There is no lawful terrorism and sinful terrorism — no halal and haram — just as there is no moderate and extremist terrorism. There are terrorist movements on the ground committing atrocious crimes with the support or acquiescence of some influential countries within and outside the Council. There is ISIS, the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups that are allied with those two organizations and cooperate and work with them.

Was it not ISIS that stormed Palmyra? Was it not the Al-Nusra Front that stormed Idlib and Jisr Al-Shughur recently, and the town of Ariha today, using the name Jaish Al-Fatah? Of course, before it was the Jaish Al-Fatah it was known as the Al-Shamiya Front. And before that, it was known as the Syrian Front, the Syrian Revolutionaries, the Hazam Movement, and so on as in a Hollywood series in which we see one episode after another.

Did not the Qatari Al-Jazeera television channel yesterday invite Al-Julani, the commander of the terrorist Al-Nusra Front, so that he could inform us that there is now sharia law in Syria, and so that Qatar, in turn, could inform us in that interview that the terrorist Al-Nusra Front is a form of moderate terrorism that can be "laundered" just as mafia gangs launder dirty money? And after all that, there are still people who speak of a moderate armed opposition. Tomorrow we shall observe some people saying that the Security Council must remove the Al-Nusra Front from the lists of terrorist entities. I wager before all of you that this will happen soon.

Once again, the latest report (S/2015/368) of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) contains many omissions and serious errors. Today we sent two identical letters to the President of the Security Council and to the Secretary-General in that regard. However, I shall only mention here that all the allegations contained in the report against the Syrian Government are based on undisclosed sources. The report uses the term "reportedly" 15 times when allegations were made against the Syrian Government, but no information is provided regarding the source of those reports or their credibility.

Even worse, the report goes further than that and makes allegations against the Syrian Government, including that it uses so-called barrel bombs, without even once using the term "reportedly", as if that matter was a proven fact. That is exactly what happened with regard to crimes in which terrorists, aided by Turkey, used chemical substances in Khan Al-Assel and other localities, and when chlorine gas and sarin gas were used in other areas. How can reports by the Secretary-General make allegations against the Government of a State Member of the United Nations without basing them on reliable sources and without reading, taking note of or referring to the reports, letters, evidence and statements submitted by the Syrian Government during the past four years? This is a very serious precedent that will undermine what remains of the credibility of the Secretariat in its handling of humanitarian issues in Syria, unless it takes the credible and rapid action required to avoid such a situation.

I should also like to draw attention to the fact that the report fails to mention that the Turkish Government has allowed thousands of trucks to enter Syria illegally through checkpoints used by United Nations convoys bringing in humanitarian aid, and has used them to transport terrorists, weapons and dangerous materials to armed terrorist groups in Syria. That has endangered the United Nations convoys themselves — as we warned Ms. Amos when she asked the Security Council to adopt resolutions 2165 (2014).

Furthermore, the unilateral economic measures imposed on the Syrian people are yet another cause of their humanitarian suffering. Those unjust and illegal

measures must therefore be lifted and the funding gap for humanitarian activities in Syria addressed. Only 17 per cent of the funding required for the 2015 Strategic Response Plan has been raised. This proves, once again, that certain countries, including, first and foremost, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and certain Western countries, only want to use the humanitarian crisis in Syria as a way to traffic commodities, as a means of political extortion and to further their own interventionist agendas.

The Syrian Government has cooperated with the United Nations to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance to all civilians. On 9 April, it agreed to most of the requests made by the United Nations and other international organizations to ensure the provision of aid to certain unstable areas. As of 27 May, that is to say as of yesterday, even though the Syrian Government has granted permission for joint United Nations agency convoys to transport humanitarian assistance to difficult-to-reach or unstable areas, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has been able to provide only 30 per cent of what has been authorized. The Syrian Government is, moreover, now considering requests for permission to be granted for more joint convoys.

Let me say onne final word. I hope this was a problem of interpretation, but while she was addressing the Council, I heard the Under-Secretary-General say "on behalf of the Syrian people". This is what the interpreter said. On behalf of my Government, I cannot allow the Under-Secretary-General to address the Council saying that she is speaking on behalf of the Syrian people. She is a representative of the Secretariat and this international Organization. This oversteps her mandate and the functions of Secretariat staff members. She is not Syrian and she has no post in Syria that allows her to speak on behalf of the Syrian people.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussions on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.